

THE BROCHURE SERIES OF ARCHITECTURAL ILLUSTRATION.

VOL. V.

FEBRUARY, 1899.

No. 2.

DETAILS OF VENETIAN ORNAMENT.

THE details of Venetian sculpture, from the Ducal Palace and the churches of S. Giobbe, S. Maria dei Miracoli, SS. Giovanni e Paolo, and S. Zaccaria, illustrated in the accompanying plates, are, with the exception of those shown in Plate X., products of the Italian Renaissance.

"It has been granted only to two nations," writes Symonds, "the Greeks and the Italians, and to the latter only at the time of the Renaissance, to invest every phase and variety of intellectual energy with the form of art. The speech of the Italians at that epoch, their social habits, their ideal of manners, their standard of morality, the estimate they formed of men, were alike conditioned and qualified by art. It was an age of splendid ceremonies and magnificent parade, when the furniture of houses, the armor of soldiers, the dress of citizens, the pomp of war and the pageantry of festival were invariably and inevitably beautiful. On the meanest articles of domestic utility, cups and platters, door-panels and chimney-pieces, coverlets for beds and lids of linen-chests, a wealth of artistic invention was lavished by innumerable craftsmen, no less skilled in technical details than distinguished by rare taste. From the Pope upon St. Peter's chair to the clerk in a Florentine counting-house, every Italian was a judge of art. Art supplied the spiritual oxygen, without which the life of the Renaissance must have been atrophied."

An attempt to trace the springs of this sudden and fecund activity would, perhaps, be of more profit than to re-describe here the familiar characteristics of Renaissance ornament; and to that end a résumé—necessarily but cursory and superficial—of Taine's most scholarly and interesting treatise on this subject, "*La Philosophie de l'Art en Italie*," is here presented.

Three conditions of things are necessary, in this writer's opinion, to enable man to appreciate and produce high art. He must, in the first place, be cultivated. A picture in a palace or a church is an ornament, and to look at it with pleasure or intelligence the spectator must be partially free from grosser preoccupations; he must have advanced out of the primitive state of barbarism and oppression; apart from the exercise of his muscles, the gratification of bellicose instincts and the satisfaction of his physical wants, he must crave noble and refined pleasures. Once brutal, he is now thoughtful; once a consumer and destroyer, he now embellishes and enjoys; once merely existing, he now adorns his life. Such a vast transformation which took place in Italy in the fifteenth century, and took place there sooner than elsewhere because of the extreme acuteness and readiness of mind that characterizes the people of that country. Civilization seems innate to them; they attain to it almost without effort and almost without assistance. Hence it is that if you



compare Italy in the fifteenth century with other European nations you will find her more polished and better qualified to embellish her life, that is to say, to appreciate and produce works of art.

At the same period England, issuing from the Hundred Years' War, entered into the horrible contest of the Two Roses. Up to 1550 it was simply a country of boors. Only one or two chimneys could be counted in a town in the interior of the kingdom; gentlemen's country mansions consisted of tenements covered with thatch, plastered with coarse clay and only lighted through lattices. In Germany the atrocious and merciless Hussite War was breaking out; and from Luther's "Table Talk" may be seen to what an extent gentlemen and the learned carried drunkenness and brutality. As for France, she was undergoing the most disastrous period of her history. The country was conquered and devastated by the English. Under Charles VII. wolves entered the faubourgs of Paris. About 1525 Count Baldassare Castiglione, the Italian ambassador, wrote: "The French know no other merit than that of arms and take no account of other things, so that not only do they not esteem learning, but indeed they abhor learned men and regard them as the vilest of creatures; and they seem to think that there is no greater insult for a man, whoever he may be, than to call him *clerk*." In sum, throughout Europe the régime was still feudal, and men, like powerful savage brutes, thought of little besides eating and drinking and physical activity.

Italy, on the contrary, was at the same period almost a modern country. The cares of war had not the same bitter and tragic hold on her people as formerly. They waged it with paid *condottieri*,—shrewd tradesmen who only killed each other by accident, and "battles" are cited in which only three soldiers were stretched on the field. Diplomacy became a substitute for force in public questions. "Italian sovereigns believe," wrote Michiavelli, "that the quality of a prince consists in knowing how to display vivacity and finesse in language, weave a network

of fraud, bedeck himself with gold and precious stones, sleep and eat more magnificently than others, and organize around himself every description of voluptuousness." They became connoisseurs, men of letters and lovers of learned conversation. For the first time since the fall of ancient civilization, we find a society which gave first place to intellectual pleasures. Cosmo de Medici in Florence established an academy of philosophy, and Lorenzo revived the Platonic banquets. No festival and no banquet was then complete without poetry. One day Pope Leo X. gave five hundred ducats to the poet Tebaldo for an epigram which had pleased him. Another poet, Accolti, was so admired that when he read in public people closed their shops to go and hear him; and his hyper-clever verses, embellished with the most subtle conceits, were so well comprehended as to excite applause on all sides. The sonnet was an instrument of praise or of satire which passed through all hands. It circulated among the artists, and Cellini narrates that when his Perseus was exhibited there were twenty posted up in one day.

But there is another characteristic of this civilization and another condition of fine art. Intellectual culture has been equally good at other epochs when art has attained to no such brilliancy. In our own day, for instance, men having acquired three centuries of experience and discovery over and above the knowledge of the sixteenth century, are better informed and better supplied with ideas than ever, and yet we cannot say that the arts of design produce as fine works as in Italy in the time of the Renaissance. Germany is certainly the most learned country in Europe; many of her young men wear spectacles, though they have very good eyes, in order to give themselves a wiser look; there is no other country in which we find such a taste for and such a natural comprehension of the higher abstract theories. It is the land of metaphysics and systems. This excess of profound meditation, however, has proved detrimental to the arts of design. The German painters subordinate color and form to thought; the best of them are philosophers astray in art, who should

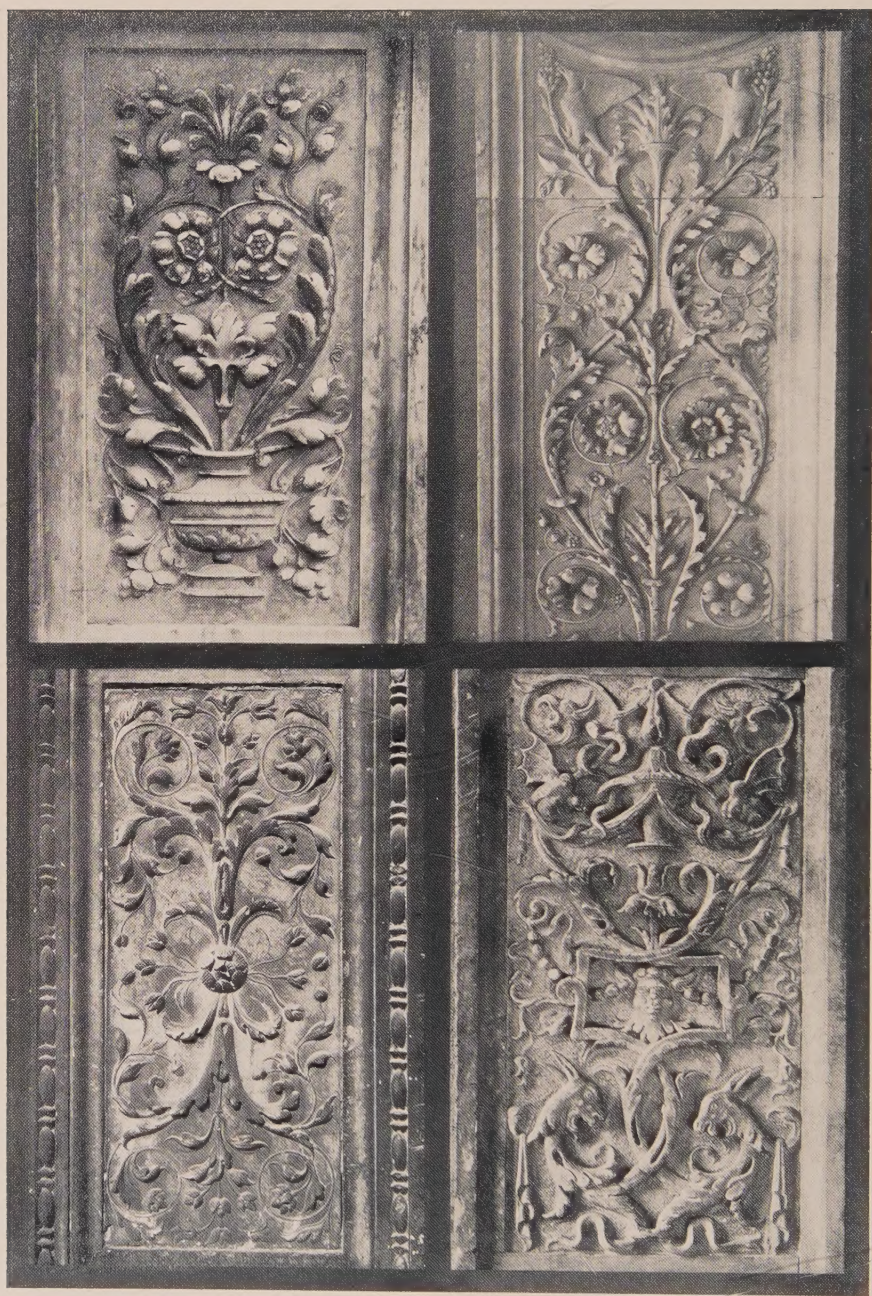


PLATE XI DETAILS OF RENAISSANCE SCULPTURE, VENICE

wield the pen rather than the brush. In England the people are Teutonic, earnest, Protestant, devoted to practical matters. Painting, design and the other arts which appeal to the senses are relegated to or fall naturally into an inferior position. It is easy to find patrons to give money for the propagation of the arts, but the money is given because these patrons believe that music diminishes Sunday inebriation and that the arts of design have a refining and moral effect upon the workman. The feeling for art is here only the fruit of education,—an exotic orange cultivated with difficulty in a hot-house at great expense, and which the cultivator generally finds tasteless. It is true that France is at this time the country where people care most for art, and yet in as far as it excels the art of other countries does it fall short of the art of the Italian Renaissance. It is more poetic, historic or dramatic than it is picturesque. It has become the rival of literature; it has plowed the same ground, made the same appeal to an insatiable curiosity, to an archaeological taste, to the craving for powerful emotions and to a morbid, over-refined sensibility.

All this is tantamount to saying that the human intellect was better balanced in relation to art in the days of the Renaissance than now. To make the arts of design flourish demands a soil which is not uncultivated, but at the same time which is not over-cultivated. In feudal Europe it was heavy and hard; nowadays it is well pulverized; formerly civilization had not plowed it enough; today it has multiplied its furrows to excess. To produce great things in the arts it is necessary that *images* be not smothered nor mutilated by ideas. The province of extreme culture is to efface images more and more in favor of ideas. Under the constant pressure of education, conversation, thought and knowledge, the primitive observation of things gets to be disordered, becomes disintegrated and fades out, to give place to naked ideas, to terms well classified, to a sort of algebraic notation. Such is our mental condition at the present time. We are no longer artists naturally. On the other hand this pageant of life, which has become for us

simply a notation and a problem, was to the Italians of the Renaissance an animated and complete spectacle. Forms and colors constituted for them the natural language of the intellect; they designed as a horse runs, as a bird flies, spontaneously.

The stateliness, the costumes, the lordly and princely display everywhere give the idea of a superb parade by serious actors. On reading their memoirs and chronicles we see that the Italians construed life as a delightful festivity. It concerned them to enjoy, to enjoy nobly and grandly, through the mind, through the senses and especially through the eyes. Religious scruples troubled them but little. Luther was scandalized on his visit to Italy. "The Italians," he wrote, "are the most impious of men. Here is an expression of which they make use when they go to church: 'Let us conform to popular errors!' 'If we were obliged,' they say again, 'to believe God's word fully we should be the most miserable of men, and we should never have a moment of pleasure.'"

With this pleasure-loving people art was no school production, no occupation of the critics, no pastime for the curious, no artificial plant, cultivated at great cost, foreign to the soil and painfully supported in an atmosphere made for maintaining the sciences, literatures, manufactures, policemen and dress-coats. The men of the Italian Renaissance were amateurs of painting, not for an hour on stated occasions, but throughout their lives, in their religious ceremonies, in their national festivities, in their avocations and their amusements. When Benvenuto Cellini had murdered an enemy in the street and was summoned before the Pope, he took care, before going to the palace, to execute several exquisite pieces of goldsmith's work. "When I came into the presence of the pontiff," he writes, "he frowned on me very much, which caused me to tremble; but as soon as he saw my work his countenance began to clear up." Another time, and after a much less excusable murder, the Pope replied to the friends of the man killed by Cellini: "You must know that men who are unique in their art, like

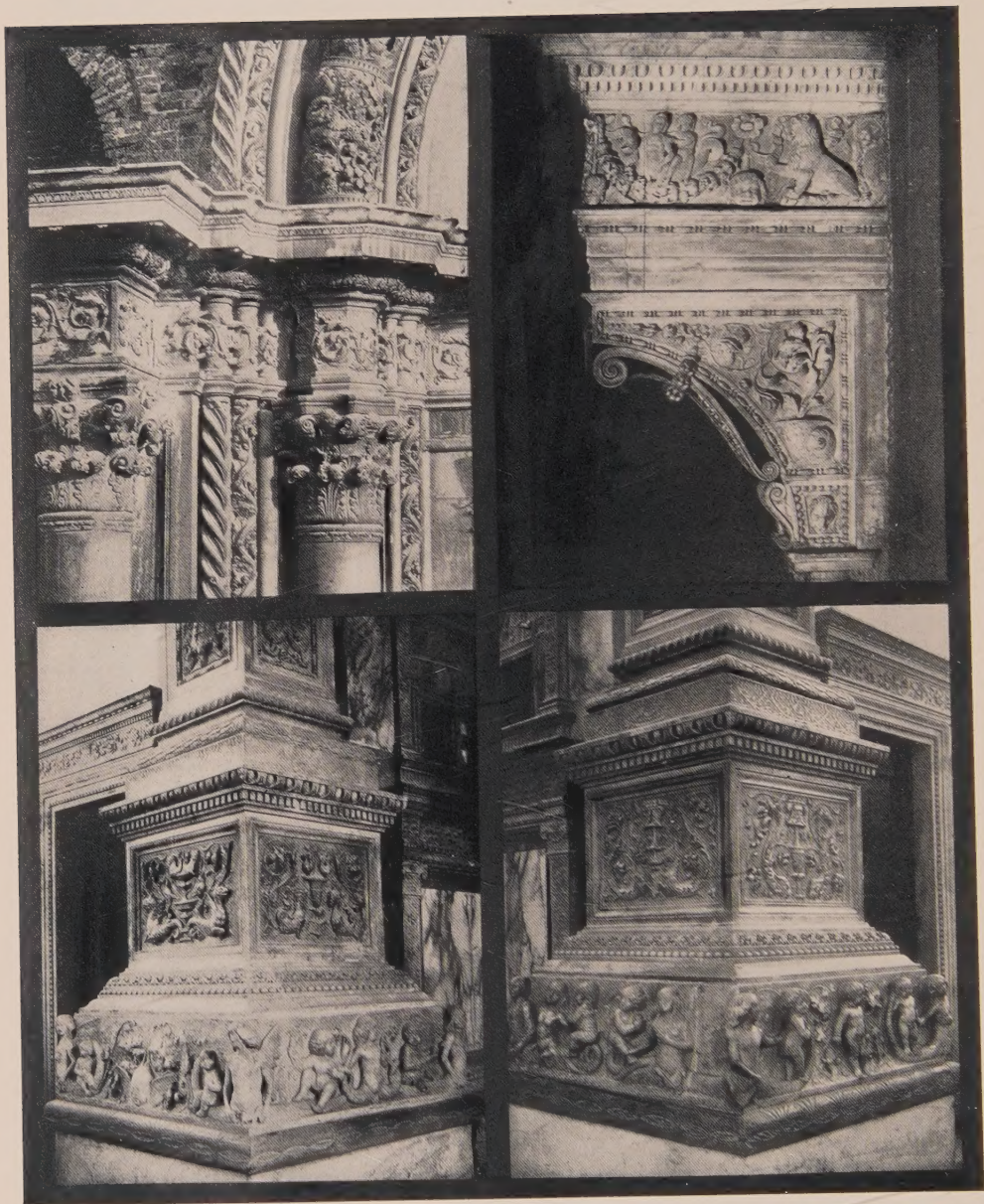


PLATE XII

DETAILS OF RENAISSANCE SCULPTURE, VENICE

Cellini, must not be subjected to the law."

People of intelligence are never more intelligent than when they are all combined together. To have works of art it is necessary first to have artists, but also studios. There were studios in those days, and, moreover, artists formed corporate bodies. The studio of that time was a workshop and not as nowadays, an ostentatious saloon to provoke commissions; and the artist had his *bottega* just as much as the cobbler or the blacksmith. Artists so eminent as Simone Martini, Gentile da Fabriano, Perugino and Ghirlandajo kept open shops where customers could buy the products of their craft from a highly-finished altar-piece down to a painted buckler or a sign to hang above the street door. The artists of Venice, like all other craftsmen, formed a guild or corporation, the officers of which took oath to honestly fulfil their duties, and to endeavor "to their utmost ability to allay all differences, not favoring their friends unduly, nor because of hate and malevolence injuring their enemies." The associates met in formal conclave twice a year to debate upon the affairs of the craft. The members called each other, without distinction, "dear brothers," and the painter of The Assumption was the confrère of a poor glass-blower or gilder.

The pupils were apprentices sharing the life and fame of their master, not amateurs who considered themselves free when they had paid for a lesson. At twelve or thirteen years of age, a boy entered the painter's, goldsmith's, architect's or sculptor's, household; for the master usually combined all these pursuits, and the young man, accordingly, studied under him not merely a fragment of art but art entire. He worked for him, did the easy things, shared in the success of the masterpiece, and was interested in it as in his own work.

The masters were equally familiar, and kept up the same beneficial intimacy with each other. One of their associations was called the Brotherhood of the Paiuolo (or meat-pot) and was limited to twelve members, among them being Andrea del Sarto, Gian Francesco, Sangallo, Pellegrino, the en-

graver Robetta and the musician Domenico Bacelli. Each had the privilege of introducing three or four persons to their feasts, to which each brought a dish of his own invention. Observe the vigor and vitality of their spirits, and how the arts of design found a place even at supper. On one occasion one of the viands served up consisted of a huge pie into which "Ulysses" was seen plunging his father for the purpose of making him young again," the two figures being represented by two boiled capons. Andrea del Sarto presented at the same feast a temple resembling the Baptistery of San Giovanni, and composed of jelly, sausages, cheese and marchpane. Domenico Puligo brought a roasted pig so treated as to represent a scullery maid watching a brood of chickens. Man seemed like a child so youthful were his spirits; he everywhere introduced the forms he loved; he resolved himself into an actor and mimic, and played with the art with which he was overflowing.

In fine, concludes Taine, "the Renaissance is a unique movement, intermediate between the middle ages and modern times, between a lack of culture and over-culture, between a reign of crude instincts and the reign of ripe ideas. Man had ceased to be a gross, warlike, carnivorous animal, only capable of exercising his limbs; he had not yet become a devotee of the midnight lamp or of the drawing-room, only capable of exercising his tongue and his understanding. He partook of both natures. He had long and profound reveries like the savage; he was moved by keen, delicate curiosity like the civilized man. Like the former he thought through images; like the latter he discovered laws. Like the former he sought sensuous pleasure; like the latter he stepped beyond vulgar pleasure. His appetites had become refined. He was interested in the externals of things, but he required to have them perfect; while the beautiful forms which he contemplated in the works of his great artists did no more than to set free the vague figures with which his brain was peopled, and satisfy the mute instincts with which his heart was moulded."



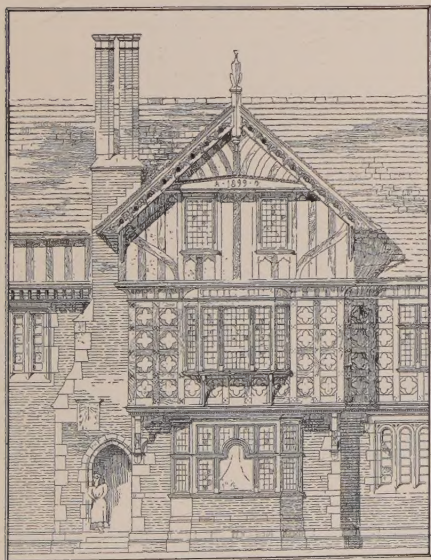
DETAILS OF RENAISSANCE SCULPTURE, VENICE

Brochure Series Competition "L."

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AWARD.

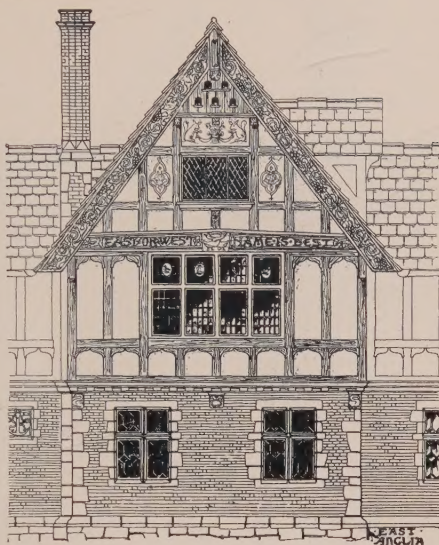
FROM among the one hundred and four designs submitted in Competition L, for "A Timber and Plaster Exterior Wall," the judge, Mr. Ralph Adams Cram, has considered three that stand out clearly beyond all the others. These designs are those of Mr. Francis H. Cruess, 32 North Fifty-sixth Street, West Philadelphia; Mr. Robert Brown, Jr., 96 Washington Street, Boston; and Mr. Walter E. Rice, 19 Exchange Place, Boston; and to these gentlemen the three prizes have been awarded in the order given.

Each of these three designs possesses some point of particular excellence, but there are more of these in the design placed first than in the others. The proportions of the first-prize design are generally excellent, though something would probably be gained by steepening the slope of the roof. The scheme is good structurally, either from the standpoint of genuine brick and timber construction or from that of the modern imitative methods. In the former case, however, the small diagonals in the second story would have to be boards applied to the surface of the brick work, the uprights and cross-pieces alone being constructional features. The brackets supporting the second story are also a little thin and weak, and their thickness should be considerably increased. The relation



FIRST-PRIZE DESIGN.

MR. FRANCIS H. CRUESS, 32 NORTH FIFTY-SIXTH STREET,
WEST PHILADELPHIA.



SECOND-PRIZE DESIGN.

MR. ROBERT BROWN JR., 96 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON.

between the timbers and plaster is admirable. This is one of the points in which modern half-timber work generally fails of the effect achieved by the old. It is a pretty safe rule that the surface of the plaster should not be greater in area than the surface of the timber work. In nearly all modern work this rule is ignored, and the timbers are narrow and widely spaced, the resulting effect being weak and meaningless. In this design the composition of the timber work proper is exceedingly delicate and refined, with considerable originality, and much subtle feeling for light and shade. The details also are good, the verge-boards particularly being brilliant and original.

The second-prize design is thoroughly strong and dignified, and shows the hand of a man familiar with the principles of half-timber construction. The timber work itself is not particularly original in design, while the beams are perhaps a little narrow for the amount of plaster work shown. On the other hand the whole effect is excellent, the construction logical and practical, while the details are singularly good and very characteristic. Here also the verge-board is good in design and unusually well drawn. The slope of the gable is noticeably better than that in the design placed first. The details of the plaster ornamentation and carving show great originality and niceness of feeling.

The third-prize design is in a different style, being pronouncedly Jacobean. It is a little dry in general effect, and the projections, particularly of the eaves, are too small. The timber work is reserved and simple to a point almost of dullness, except the enriched course just above the doorway, which is original, and in actual work would be very brilliant in color. The doorway



PLATE XIV

DETAILS OF RENAISSANCE SCULPTURE, VENICE.

itself is a most excellent piece of design; but the high, narrow windows on either side are hardly satisfactory, being rather suggestive of too modern methods. The construction is the most straightforward and practical of the three prize designs, possibly more so than is absolutely necessary.

From the other designs which received no prizes several have been selected for a Mention. That of Mr. R. Brown, Jamaica Plain, Mass., has certain of the good characteristics of the second-prize design, but it is by no means as successful either in composition, distribution of wood and plas-



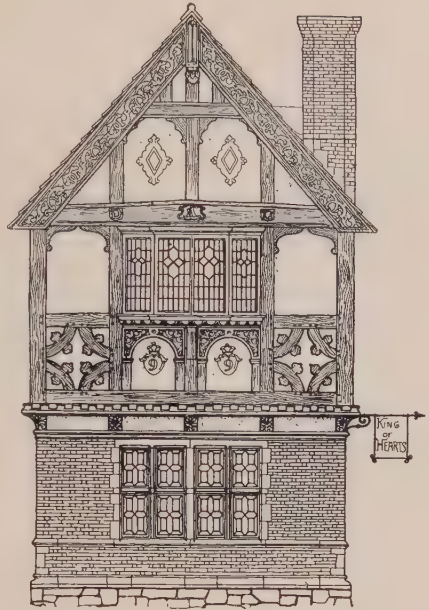
THIRD-PRIZE DESIGN.

MR. WALTER E. RICE, 19 EXCHANGE PLACE, BOSTON.

ter, or detail. It is, however, practical and workable.

The design of Mr. Wilfred A. Norris, Cambridge, Mass., is also frank and straightforward. The slope of the gable is much too low, however, and the timber composition is not very original. This treatment suggests a shop front, and shows very well how half-timber work adapts itself to this purpose.

The design of Mr. James C. Green, New York City, is French in its feeling, and possesses also the weakness of French half-timber work. The composition is excellent. Architecturally the design is first-rate, but the timber work proper is dull and lifeless. If this had been more carefully studied and showed greater feeling, this design would have received one of the prizes.

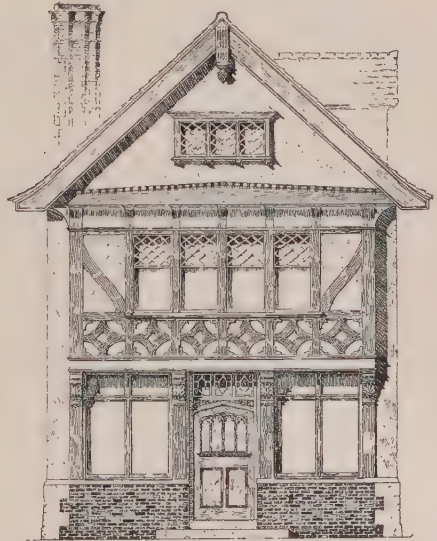


MENTION.

MR. R. BROWN, JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.

The design of Mr. Walter S. Wade, Buffalo, is also more or less French, so far as the projecting gable is concerned, but this is the weakest part of the design, the chamfered beams being cheap and lifeless in effect. The proportions are good, however, and the composition satisfactory, while the timber work is fairly logical and structural.

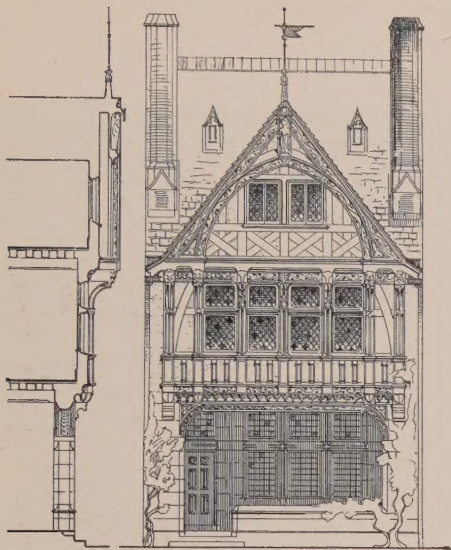
The design of Mr. John J. Driscoll, Boston, has several excellent points, but it is



MENTION.

MR. WILFRED A. NORRIS, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.



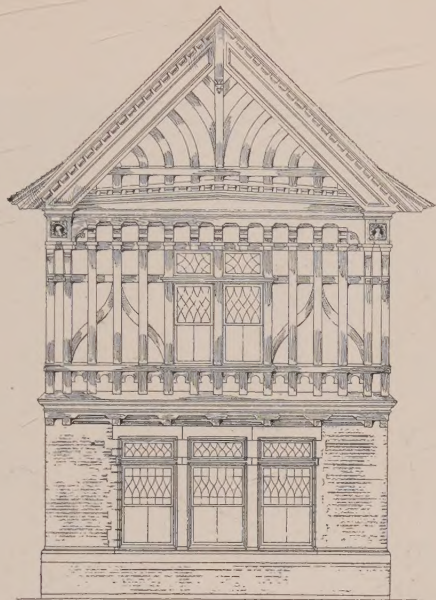


MENTION.

MR. JAMES C. GREEN, NEW YORK CITY.

confusing and the parts are too small, the beams too narrow, and the diagonal braces wrongly placed for any structural suggestion. Again, it shows a heavy projection for all the timbers beyond the surface of the plaster, which is against all laws of half-timber work. In the best examples the surface of the wall is practically flat, the timbers projecting not at all from the face of the plaster.

The announcement of Competition "M," for a design of lettering for the front cover



MENTION.

MR. JOHN C. DRISCOLL, BOSTON.

of a treatise on pen drawing is repeated on the advertising page facing the inside of this issue, and a new Competition "N," for the design for an ornamental seal, is announced. Both these Competitions close on March 15, 1899.

Club Notes.

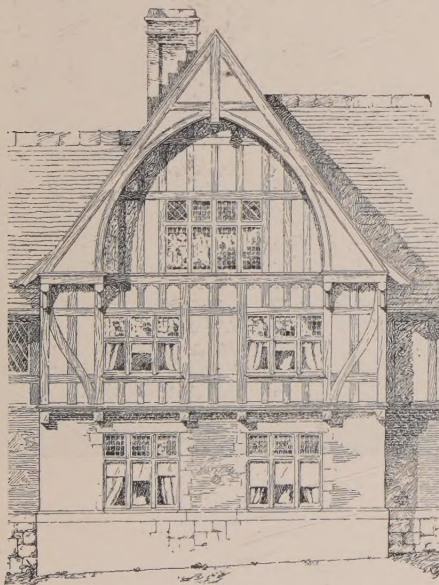
The New Jersey Society of Architects held its annual meeting on Friday, January 6, at 842-4 Broad Street, Newark, N. J., and elected the following officers for the ensuing year: President, Paul G. Botticher, Newark; First Vice-President, James H. Lindsley, Newark; Second Vice-President, Robert C. Dixon, Jr., Union, N. J.; Secretary and Treasurer, George W. Von Arx, Jersey City, N. J. (re-elected).

Trustees for three years: Albert Beyer, Hoboken, and Henry Klemm, Newark.

The President appointed Standing Committees as follows: Law and Press, Charles P. Baldwin, Chairman; James H. Lindsley and Herman Kreither. Entertainment, Thomas Cressey, Chairman; Valentine J. Hobbs and Henry C. Klemm.

Copies of the new constitution, by-laws and code of ethics were distributed, and after the usual business the members adjourned to a banquet.

Mr. Louis J. Sullivan addressed the Chicago Architectural Club on Monday evening, January 23, on the "Principles of Architectural Design."



MENTION.

MR. WALTER W. WADE, BUFFALO.





PLATE XVII

DWELLING-HOUSE, DEVENTER